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OUR LORD

Belief in the Deity of Christ

By

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Professor of Theology in Erlangen

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OUR LORD

"THE LORD"—this is the title by which, best of all, the most ancient Christendom already addressed its Master and Redeemer: "Lord," the title by which it used to call upon him. In itself there is nothing uncommon or superhuman in such a designation. Just as in our language the word is capable of varied interpretation. Whether we have to deal with a compliment which often means little (1 Sam. 1. 15; Matt. 21. 30; 25. 11; John 4. 11; 20. 25), or with the term of real subordination and dependence which again obtains a different meaning according to the rank of the addressed (Matt. 13. 27; 2 Sam. 18. 31; 19. 20), must be ascertained from the situation. Subjects speak today of their "lord," "master," or "chief." Originally it may have been otherwise when the disciples of Jesus addressed their rabbi as "lord," for which the title "teacher" or "master" may also be used. According to Mark it was the only current one (Matt. 8. 25, comp. Mark 4. 38; Matt. 10. 24 sq.; John 13. 13, comp. Matt. 9. 11; 17. 24). To be

sure a personality which, not only in the closest circle of the disciples (John 21. 7), but also in a somewhat broader fellowship was simply called "the Lord" (Mark 11. 3), seemed especially important. In frequent cases in which outsiders addressed Jesus thus, it must be left undecided whether they simply meant the respectable man, especially the rabbinic teacher (Matt. 8. 2, 6, 8, etc.; comp. 8. 19; 22. 16 and 17. 15 with Mark 9. 17), or whether here and there it indicated something of an acknowledgment of royal Messianic dignity (Matt. 15. 22; 20. 30 sq.). At any rate an enhanced content of the title would follow more and more from an enhanced estimate of the person of Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew recorded from the mouth of Jesus an appeal "Lord, Lord" which is certainly not addressed to him in that instance as to a master ever so revered, but as the Messiah and Judge of the world (Matt. 7. 21 sq., comp. 25. 37). Thus this address borders on the line of the human measure: as one has only *one* God as Father, thus also only *one* Master and Lord (Matt. 23. 8 sqq., comp. 1 Cor. 12. 5 sq.; Ephes. 4. 5 sq.).

We see these declarations fully developed immediately after the close of the earthly life of Jesus, in the congregation believing on him. We have a sketch of the first Pentecostal sermon by Peter, the drift of which for practical religious purpose is to put directly the Lord Christ in place of God, the Lord. In the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit which came upon the assembled disciples, Peter saw the fulfillment of God's prophecy by the prophet Joel (Acts 2. 16 sqq.; Joel 3. 1 sqq.): "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Since the prophets had held out these prospects for the last days, the last days had now begun: the great and notable day of the Lord was imminent and with it the downfall of the universe. Whoever wished to be saved must cling to God himself and thus fulfill the prophecy which the prophet gives: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Who is this Lord? As a matter of course the prophet thought of the Lord of heaven and earth, of the everlasting rock upon which alone one could stand when everything else shook; for he wrote literally: "Whosoever shall invoke the name Jahveh"

(Jehovah). Since the Jews in later times did not venture to mention this most holy name but substituted for it "Lord," even in quoting biblical texts, occasion was given in this case to think at the same time of Jesus. But according to this the designation by which he was long ago addressed soared to a very unique height. The Lord who was to be called upon in order to obtain everlasting security is Jesus. If the Jews had no more a name of God, because God himself had been removed to an inaccessible distance, the disciples of Jesus had a name to which they clung and by which in confession and invocation they reverently approached the gracious God himself (Acts 2. 36): "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Jehovah no longer is called upon, but the Lord Jesus Christ; in whom was exactly that which Israel once had in his covenant—God: yea, the completion of all that which Israel expected from this covenant-God. One did not merely think on the nameless God, in whom we live and have our being, but called upon and apprehended him whose mercy was felt in the experimental facts of history.

These were nearly the experiences and thoughts which one wished to express by calling Jesus the "Lord" in the full sense. Modern men may find it hard to speak in a language which the first professors would recognize as their opinions. The common intention of all, however, who at all times called the man Jesus not merely their Master and Teacher, but in that very unique sense their Lord, was no doubt to lift this man somehow beyond the human measure and to put him over against all other men, as it were by the side of God. Consequently in the course of the development of dogma what we become accustomed to designate as the divinity of Christ, is contained in this invocation of Him as Lord. These lines of thought are familiar to all apostles alike. Paul also referred to the passage from Joel, when he extolled the saving power of the confession of Jesus as the Lord who brought us the presence of the gracious God (Rom. 10. 6 sqq.; 9. 13). "Jesus is the Lord"—thus reads the simple and weighty confession in which the oldest professors expressed everything which they had in Jesus (1 Cor. 12. 3). To distinguish their Lord from all

others, they spoke indeed of the "Lord of Glory" (1 Cor. 2. 8; Jas. 2. 1). In that lies his exaltation into the sphere of divine Majesty (see perhaps John 1. 14).

In the same direction points the second title which the Pentecostal preaching of Peter attributed to Jesus: God hath made him a "Messiah" or "Christ." Certainly the question cannot be that, for in the original Jewish idea the expected Messiah was something else than a man. Prophecy seldom borders on a kind of divinity of the Messiah (Isa. 9. 5). From the title "the anointed" it could already be inferred that a person anointed with God's spirit and power was present to the mind. As the king was anointed, and thereby received a token of the divine help for his office, so the King of the future who was to consummate all hopes of Israel, was expected to be not merely an anointed one beside others but "the anointed" one, plainly, who in the fullness of the divine Spirit with which he was endowed, had to carry out not a certain and limited work but the work of God in general. At the same time he remained in general a human hero, whose one ideal image in later

times was enhanced to the fantastical, but not raised wholly beyond the human.

With this Messianic expectation the hope is also expressed in the Old Testament that God himself should come for a deliverance of his people and seek out his flock (Isa. 40. 9 sqq.; Ezek. 34. 11; Mal. 3. 1). With this view a purely human conceived Messiah could have well been provided for as preparing the way of God; but it is characteristic that in the New Testament interpretations of these prophetical passages, the Forerunner is not the Messiah but John the Baptist. He was the angel or messenger who was to prepare the way of Jehovah (Mark 1. 2; Matt. 11. 10; Luke 1. 17). He is the voice of one crying in the wilderness (Mark 1. 3): "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." With this "Lord," however, coincided the subsequent Messiah—and we have arrived at the same result that Jesus appeared exalted into the sphere of God when one said of him that he was made both Lord and Christ. This consideration unites more readily with the human Messiah-picture, since there also the King whom God set upon his holy hill, acts much less in the

direction from below upward, than from above downward. He exercises the Lord's rule upon earth and thus stands entirely on God's side (Psa. 2. 2): the kings of the earth set themselves "against the Lord, and against his anointed." When the victory is obtained, the song of triumph is heard (Rev. 11. 15): "The Kingdoms of this world are become (the Kingdoms) of our Lord, and of his Christ." Besides, when the first Christians ascribed to their Christ the world-judgment and with it the end of earthly history, they expected of him a truly divine function.

With a vigorous rejection of this Christian faith, a Jewish work belonging to the end of the first century puts the words into the mouth of the God who gave beginning to heaven and earth (4. Ezra 6. 6): "Thus the end shall come alone by me and not by another one." But just this was the experience of the Christians that in their Christ the saving God met them to whom they confessingly clung in the judgment and destruction of the world. This conviction they expressed in the name above every name, at which naming every knee should bow (Phil.

2. 11): "The Lord Jesus Christ." What too often becomes for us a worn-out formula contained originally the whole fullness of the forceful statement: Jesus, the Messiah, is the Lord, that is, he stands for us in the place of God, the Lord.

Let us understand what this means. It has always been the fashion that followers showed an adored genius enthusiastic admiration as "the divine master," or that courtly crouching servility, especially in the East, should address a ruler like a god. For the latter mode of expression many examples have been adduced, especially from New Testament times, and it would be a task in itself to investigate more accurately the similarity and difference which existed between such flourishes and belief in the divinity of Christ. Considering the copiousness of the biblical material which must be mastered in a few pages, we confine ourselves to the reference that the faith of the first church included a unique element which raised it from the start above the parallels of the apotheosis of endowed genius or divinely protected activity. Here the opinion is not merely that the excess of original genius

could be traced back only to divine inspiration—Jesus did not pass for a genius in the domain of religion who possibly made an unexpected discovery closed to the common mass, or disclosed "revelations," in the sense of startling evolutions. As soon as he was raised above all prophets and kings to the level of a "Lord and Messiah," he broke through the circumference of everything be it ever so sublime and matchless, which was divinely influenced yet ever humanly working. Over against us he is on the side of God. This cannot be otherwise if his service is in the unique domain of religion. Genius in the realm of art, science or politics always remains in the compass of human activity. But for the entire Jewish world-conception, in whose soil belief in the "Lord" grew, definite work on religious ground as a mere outflow even of the most inspired human activity influenced by the divine Spirit, is not at all conceivable. Greek intellectualism may be satisfied with a knowledge of God, which one may acquire and express, but on Jewish biblical soil one hungers after the meeting with God himself. A man, therefore, who fulfills all religious

hopes and whom his disciples on this account recognize not only as the political Messiah but as the consolation of Israel (Luke 2. 25, comp. Isa. 40. 1, 9 sq.), is moved without controversy to the side of God.

To this instinctive feeling of the original faith ecclesiastical usage does justice, which does not speak of a "divinity" but of the "Godhead" of Christ. The proof, that with this interpretation of the belief in the Lord we apprehend the real sense of the first Christians, is the exclusiveness with which the divine predicate for Jesus is used. In the competition of schools and cliques many "divine masters" should finally find a place beside each other. Though the first Christians were not the least able to conceive such an idea, it proved that they were in earnest about the singular position as Lord of their Christ. A New Testament book in which one imagines he hears now and then the most genuine sounds of primitive Christian feeling which may perhaps have become strange to us, the Revelation of John, exhibits to us in striking pictures the elevation of the crucified Jesus as Lord and Christ. The same adoring songs of praises resounded for Him

that sitteth upon the throne and for the Lamb (Rev. 5. 13; 7. 10); for the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, hath prevailed and taken his seat on the throne of God (Rev. 3. 21; 7. 17; see 21. 22 sq.; 22. 1). We see no trace of a feeling that such an apotheosis could prejudice the majesty of the one God, and this on the soil of the stiff-monotheistic Judaism which never knew anything of demi-gods and worship of heroes, and in a book which was keenly alive to the deification of even the highest creatures (Rev. 19. 10; 22. 9)! John was not conscious of any apotheosis, but simply of the acceptance of the King whom God had appointed as His divine representative. Where one encountered heathenish deification of an earthly ruler, it was felt and opposed as awful blasphemy—not because the worshiping adoration raised a false object to divine dignity, but because every apotheosis of a man was an abomination. It was a "name of blasphemy" and a robbery of God's honor when the Roman emperor called himself "Augustus," that is, divine majesty (Rev. 13. 1; 17. 3). Whoever undertakes to dive into the real mean-

ing of the predicates of the Godhead which the first Christians attributed to their Lord, will not find it easy to press down this conviction by supposed parallels to the level of that which was current in the history of religion. The seriousness with which Jesus was wholly treated like God the Lord himself, remains absolutely unprecedented.

This will become still more evident by presenting to ourselves the position of the first Christians to their Lord in its essential details. The Christian stood to Christ in the religious and moral relation as one only can and should stand to God. One called upon the name of the Lord to be saved. At the same time the subtle difference of the Roman dogma between the worship of God and the invocation of the saints was not yet invented. That lies in the line of heathenish apotheosis. In primitive Christianity He who was called upon actually stood in God's place, for one expected from him the very thing which God alone could give—absolution from sin and salvation in judgment (Acts 2. 38; 22. 16; Rom. 10. 10 sqq.). How current this custom in prayer was may be seen from this, that the Christians were

mentioned as a people (Acts 9. 14, 21; 1 Cor. 1. 2; 2 Tim. 2. 22), "who call on the name of the Lord." We can also adduce from these some distinct examples: While Jesus addressed his Father with "Lord" (Matt. 11. 25), and before his death prayer to Him (Luke 23. 46): "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," in the case of the first martyr, Stephen, the Lord Jesus himself took the place of the "Father" (Acts 7. 58): "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." How self-evident this mediation was we see from the benediction-formula current in the apostolic epistles: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (2 Cor. 13. 14; comp. Rom. 1. 7, etc.; 2 John 1). Grace in the full sense here meant that which only God can bestow, but with him the exalted Christ is completely united. When Paul once recorded of his prayer for deliverance from hard temptation and burden (2 Cor. 12. 8): "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice," it may be doubtful whether God is meant or Christ; but the latter is more probable because the answer is very proper in the mouth of the crucified and risen Saviour runs: "My grace is sufficient

for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness!" But the very fact that one may sometimes waver between God and Christ when using the term "Lord," also that speech glided unawares from the one to the other, suggests how completely Christ was raised in the apostolic thought to the level of God (for instance, Mark 16. 20; Acts 2. 47; 8. 22; 9. 28, 31; Jas. 5. 11; Rom. 12. 11; Ephes. 5. 10, comp. with Rom. 12. 2).

In moral respects also the apostolic faith connected itself absolutely with the authority of the "Lord" and his words. For the moral judgment of Paul it made a telling difference whether in a certain question one was restricted to one's own, though spiritually-influenced, thinking, or, whether we have before us a clear word or injunction of the Lord (1 Cor. 7. 10, 12, 25). Such a one is of equal weight as a precept of God. The apostle in all his acts knew himself dependent on his Lord Christ, who by his death and resurrection obtained a lordly right over the living and dead (Rom. 14. 6 sqq.): "for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." Thus speaks a man who could

not forcibly enough warn against the bondage of men (1 Cor. 7. 23). The Christ whom he served he considered not as a mere man, and certainly not in the sense that perhaps he were not a man, but so that in all things which he did and taught us he stood on the side of God.

Only from this self-evident feeling do we understand opposite sayings like these (Gal. 1. 1, 10, 12), that Paul meant to be an apostle not of men, neither by man but by Jesus Christ; that he received not his gospel of man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: "for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." One may discover different and perhaps opposing points of view in the further extended theories with which the different apostles established the divine position of Christ but in their decisive practical attitude no unbiased inquirer would be able to show the shadow of a contradiction. The position of a Paul was here the same as that of the simple believers of the primitive church who were unresponsive to high speculations. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a trace that people who believed in Jesus at all had practically assessed him

otherwise than as the Messiah of God whom one invoked as God himself and to whom one submitted as to the divine Lord.

It is our task to clearly point out this tremendous fact. The history of the world knew no greater riddle than this that the people who ate and drank with their Master, or knew at least that he died the death of a criminal, did not assert only that his spirit nevertheless worked on and that his work could not be destroyed, but they also believed that he was exalted to the throne of God and they awaited his coming again to the last judgment. Every man's fate would be decided by this exalted Lord. At the same time we do not have to deal with a view the manifestation of which in a certain place and the gradual spread of which could be proved, whereby one could also observe how the apotheosis outgrew itself and threw a naturally human estimate more and more into the background. This may be asserted of the enlargement of the theories—but the salient point and the telling question as to the first origin of the practical belief in the "Lord" which laid at the bottom of all

theories, was not touched thereby at all. According to recent criticism it is no longer possible to construct an extensive, hidden development behind our documents in whose long course the gradual apotheosis of Jesus could be placed, for in the department of New Testament criticism a retrograde movement has taken place, not in the sense that all are agreed as to the "genuineness" and credibility of the essential writings, but in the sense that no serious inquirer can any more put considerable spaces of time between the events and the composition of the earliest books of the New Testament writings. The principal epistles of Paul were written about twenty years after Christ's death, and there is no indication in them that they had first to bring about a new estimate of the person of Christ. No one will assert that the estimate of Christ, as we have it in the discourses of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, was a mere reflection of the Pauline teaching. Still more remote is the supposition that the oldest Gospel as that of Mark is usually considered, or the oldest collections of "Sayings of Jesus," made by Matthew, had fully changed his picture on

the basis of additional dogmatic assumption. Thus one cannot get rid of the fact that in all these writings which originated not long after the death of Jesus, we meet with a harmonious adoration of the "Lord" which raised him far above prophetico-human measure and placed him on a level with God. By this we certainly do not mean to say that there was everywhere palpable belief in the "metaphysical" divine sonship of Jesus, that is, in the appearance of the divine nature or substance, of such categories the oldest Christians may have thought little or not at all. The discourses of the Acts of the Apostles whose point of view might best answer the prevalent popular faith, described Jesus as a man whom God acknowledged by signs and miracles, or whom he anointed with spirit and power for his work (Acts 2. 22; 10. 38, comp. Luke 24. 19). This human foundation could not be lost so long as Jesus was called "the Christ," that is, "the Anointed." Of the same "man" it is also said that God hath ordained that he should judge the world (Acts 17. 31), and (10. 36): "He is Lord of all." Of course it was God who thus exalted the

man Jesus (Acts 2. 36; 5. 31). If one could not assert that a long luxuriating increase of mythological poetry raised a hero of a long past to such heights, if one must rather admit that he has to deal with an event which effectuated itself in the bright light of history and on a soil singularly unsuited for fantastically heathenish deification, the question concerning reality or illusion becomes a burning one and cannot be decided without a moment's hesitation in favor of the latter possibility. With deeper insight modern theologians have perceived that the difficulty of transposing this supernatural history into a normally human process increased in the same degree as one, in fairness, relinquished the extravagances of a literary criticism which relegated the essential parts of the New Testament to the second century.

Let us examine therefore the causes which led primitive Christendom to this matchless estimate of its Lord, and whether the same are still sufficient for us.

The next and strongest point of support for belief in the "Lord and Messiah" was the certainty of Jesus' resurrection. Again

and again the apostolic preaching proved his identity by this practical proof (Acts 2. 24, 32; 3. 15; 4. 10; 10. 40; 13. 30 sq.; 17. 31): "This Jesus, whom ye have crucified, hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." The beginning of the first Epistle of Peter sounds like the shouting confession of the formerly hopeless disciple whom the resurrection of the Master awakened to a new hope (1. 3 sqq.): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" Paul, who knew not Christ after the flesh, would have considered this belief as untenable if it had not been founded on the resurrection (1 Cor. 15. 12 sqq.). Only the Risen could be invoked (Rom. 10. 9 sqq.), and by this very resurrection Christ had the ability to mediate for us the righteousness of God (Rom. 4. 25, comp. 2. Cor. 5. 21). Because the Risen One interceded for us, we become assured of the grace of God (Rom. 8. 34). The meaning of this connection between Christ's resurrection and Messiahship is certainly not that the miracle in itself

could establish belief in the "Lord." The Old Testament also told of resuscitations from death (1 Kings 17. 22; 2 Kings 4. 35): but no one ever thought of it that the prophets who performed the miracle, or those who were raised were lords or gods. The resurrection was rather to be understood in a greater connection. For the oldest Christendom the thought would certainly have been inconceivable that a man who remained in death should be the Messiah. On this account confidence died with Jesus's death (Luke 24. 21) and it could only again rise with his resurrection. An idealism which believed in the victory of one who had been actually overthrown, was unattainable for the apostles. Whoever should be the Messiah he had to prove his lordly position over a hostile world and over death (see also Mark 15. 22). Could one trust in him, as during his earthly life in the miracles, which he did, a tangible basis had to exist for the declaration (Luke 7. 16): "God hath visited his people." But isolated miracles did not offer this basis. They might be the works of a false prophet or Messiah (Mark 13. 22, see Deut. 13. 1 sqq.). On this ac-

count Jesus wrought miracles not to awaken but to strengthen belief (Mark 6. 5; 8. 11 sq.). They served as proof that belief in the living God and the "Lord" ordained by him, was not fancy but reality. But faith in itself had deeper roots. The resurrection of Jesus as a miracle on an individual from which some inferences should be drawn did not come into consideration, but rather his establishment in the position itself of Lord. One wished to have present the living person of the Messiah to which he clung by an invoking profession. Thus the resurrection from death became a pledge that God's Kingdom and King must conquer, and that the Lord used the designs of men for accomplishing his counsel (Acts 4. 26 sq.). The Jesus, whose life one knew, and on whom to believe as the Messiah one was consequently disposed, appeared now as the authentic Messiah, for he was the living God, all that God could be to the heart of the believer.

With these lines of thought an obvious objection is settled. That the apostles believed in Jesus as the Lord because of his resurrection, is not a sufficient reason for us, for we who were born later have no imme-

diate certainty of the event that took place; and if the thought arises that the certainty of the apostles might after all have been an illusion, we have no means of direct conviction. How, then, can we establish belief in the Lord on a fact doubtful at least to modern feeling, which itself already required faith or needed proof? In the last analysis primitive Christian believers who did not belong to the closest circle of the witnesses chosen before (Acts 10. 41 sq.) occupied in this respect the same position as ourselves. That one was then more inclined to believe in miracles than today can make no fundamental difference in a matter which depends not upon disposition and probability, but upon an absolute certainty. In the face of their first hearers the apostles themselves had to consider already that an isolated reference to the resurrection of their Master would not have been accepted; for this reason they did not make it, but referred to the facts of experience for which the exaltation of their Master served as support and explanation. By this method the essential personal ground of faith was uncovered. To be sure the immediate facts of experience

from which the apostolic testimony started had an external character, and for this reason are as inaccessible to us as the resurrection itself. Wonderful workings of the Spirit were felt or healings of the sick were performed. This the apostles explained as the works of the exalted Lord (Acts 2. 33; 3. 15; 4. 10). Where such did not occur faith had to rely on inner experiences which are also accessible to us. The Ethiopian treasurer believed in the Lord Jesus after Philip had shown unto him in his death and resurrection the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. (Acts 8. 32 sqq.): "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. . . . In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." As certain as the outward striking agreement of prophecy and fulfillment was of importance there, just as certain the return to a decisive personal experience opens at the same time. He who fulfills the prophecy satisfied also the need of the God-seeking human heart whose expression was prophecy. The law and the prophets testified of Jesus, for he, the judge of all men, is the moral standard from which no conscience can withdraw—and at the same time he offered the

forgiveness which every conscience needed (Acts 10. 42).

These are the decisive marks by which one perceived Christ as the representative of God. The holy love of God for which we thirst has become a surety in him. Whether one made his experience with Christ, whether he acknowledged him as his Saviour according to the impression which went forth from him, this decided finally whether he called him in truth his Lord; for the primitive apostolic preaching could not have meant that the formal pronunciation of a name should effect acquittal in the last judgment. At all times one considered what Paul revealed more clearly (Rom. 10. 10): "with the heart man believeth, with the mouth confession is made." Though the end of this confession was future deliverance, yet a necessary and clear connection existed between future and present. Whoever called upon the Lord received the Spirit as pledge of belonging to him and his church which was to be saved (Acts 2. 38; 10. 47). This pledge made the exaltation of Christ, to which the apostles bore witness appear credible as being based on experience; and

with Christ as the victor one felt himself safe in the present and in the future. This was at all times the innermost kernel of spirit-possession, though wondrous, and, for us unintelligible, covers may surround it. These husks were certainly not the essence: but we understand them as the testimonies of a purely supernatural event. Whoever felt the corresponding inner experience with Christ, believed in the testimony of his resurrection and exaltation. It harmonized with the certainty that this Christ was in truth the Lord, and without this testimony the full certainty could not be obtained—for in the Lord Christ one wished to ascertain not a God of thought, but the real God and Lord of the world.

Testimony of the historical reality of Christ as the Lord and experience of that which he could do as Saviour and Lord, served to establish the conviction: "Jesus, the Christ, is the Lord." This conviction can in no other way be established today. On the whole one will be disposed to think so much of Christ as he experiences of him in virtue of personal need. The Belief of Authority in uncritical times may drag along

many a surplus, yet that can only be considered as truly established which has been appropriated in the described manner. It can therefore only promote the knowledge of Christ when modern theology binds itself to no sanctified tradition, but sifts tradition thoroughly. Belief that one can be master of this matter by pure historical inquiry is a delusion. Certainly one is to institute the most impartial inquiry in order to get at the reality as near as possible: for we wish to have Christ as he really is and no ideal, imaginary figure can help us. But to ascertain this reality purely historical means are insufficient. Personal estimate of Christ has a weighty word to say. This lies in the matter itself. Religious realities open not to exact science, but the word often applies (Matt. 11. 25): "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The Spirit which proceeded from Christ and apprehended the heart which is not opposed to any honest examination, but which can also not be substituted for by any science, always rendered the decision. In asking for the reason of our

belief in the Lord, we shall never be able to eliminate personal religious experience which we have made or did not make in him.

A purely historical judgment is also excluded by the condition of the documents. It cannot be denied that the details of the life of Jesus were cleared through a more accurate insight into the documentary relations of the first three Gospels in whose estimate, in spite of some important objections of recent times, the overwhelming majority of investigators of all tendencies agree. The conclusive judgment as a whole, however, will simply stop before the fact that the older as well as later documentary strata described only a Jesus with a wholly incommensurable consciousness—and that no real historical instance suggested the supposition of an invention of the picture as a whole. There exists also no "oldest source" which offered a development of Jesus seen at a glance, at whose beginning stood a simple prophet; at whose end the Lord-consciousness. Whether we put a superhuman word from the oldest sources into this or that period of the life of Jesus, or refuse it entirely; whether we gladly receive from the later

documentary strata, especially from Luke, portions of a simple, prophetic preaching or accounts of a miraculous character, or reject them as mythical, an exact and controllable historical observation decides in the rarest cases, but almost always a subjective opinion. By this we neither wish to prohibit nor disparage historical inquiry, but we wish to remind that consciously or unconsciously adduced suppositions essentially influence the result. It would cross to a theology believing in the "Lord," but must omit reference to the decisive instance of personal experience—whereas others may impress the world with nominally pure historical science.

The forceful question which we must put before all other historical examination is today again fundamentally the same as that which is set against Rationalism. Is there a revelation of God in history which cannot be surpassed, on which we can rest for all times—or, is there only a perpetual development even in the history of religion before whose heights we may stop with awe-inspiring wonder, but which, however, do not stand in a unique and indissoluble relation to the God of the world to come? Applied to

Jesus, this question reads: Is he a prophet of God, the most preëminent, and peerlessly surpassing all others—or is the self-realization and presentation of God in history in short "The Lord"? Personally expressed: have we belief about Jesus—or belief in Jesus? The most modern theology with greatest clearness decides in favor of the first alternative. For it Jesus is certainly not the civil, meek and kind teacher in whose revelations of God and virtue the older rationalism reflected itself, for the intervening century taught us enthusiasm for storm and stress, originality and energy, genial struggling and rushing. The deed of powerful personality displaced the word of poets and thinkers. Thus Jesus also from a popular philosopher became a hero. This picture is richer than the old rationalistic drawing; it absorbs traits of reality which once obliterated the difference against the real Messiah-figure of the first Gospels. But it goes beyond the limit in that it moves us to thoughts or often only to opinions about God, and draws our imagination full of phantasies into the atmosphere in which it itself stands. In short: what

every commanding personality performs in any department of the higher mental life, Jesus accomplished in the realm of religion, whereby a guarantee for his lasting and exclusive dominion is so little to be given as for this, that no creative mind of the future can show entirely new paths to our æsthetic feeling by surprising "revelations." But there is no doubt that the real Jesus made quite different claims. If he claimed to be the Messiah, no recollection of contemporaneous forms covers up the fact that he thereby placed himself at the immovable center and at the same time at the end of history. And the question simply reads: Truth or illusion? For an illusion remains what it is, though it seems charming and may be developed as an almost necessary expression of self-consciousness.

He whose religious need is satisfied with a Jesus who imagined himself to be the Messiah, but really was only a most powerful religious genius, may arrange the sources according to his points of view—which from the start forbid him to allow the full height of the apostolic experience of "the Lord." But if our religious need and

that of numberless Christians in all centuries coincides with that which the apostles testified of their Lord, we shall have at least the scientific right equally to approach the sources from this point of view, and to ask whether we have not therein the key to an impartial and unvexed understanding of the "immensely high estimate of one's own self" in Jesus.

All the apostles agreed in this that they had in Jesus the Mediator of their new and sure relation to God, and that access to the Father is entirely connected with his person. They received from him neither new ethics nor unheard of communications of God's nature, but were convinced that he realized and at best deepened what long ago was deposited in the Old Testament. The existence of his person as the enduring mediator was the new revelation. Nothing came from Christ, but Christ himself worked in a helpful and redeeming manner. In him the gracious God met sinful humanity. The self-surrendering union with him and the communion of his Spirit gave inward freedom from guilt and the burden of sin, divine sonship and pledge of eternal life. It trans-

lated the believer into the heavenly world and God's eternal Kingdom (for instance, Rom. 1. 16 sq.; 5. 11; 8. 1 sqq., 15 sq; 1 Cor. 1. 4 sqq.; 2 Cor. 5. 17, 21; Gal. 1. 4; 3. 2, 13; Eph. 1. 3; 2. 6; 1 Pet. 1. 18 sq.; 2. 5; 1 John 3. 1 sqq.; Rev. 5. 10; John 1. 12)—and all this not merely in the sense that Christ's historical personality had produced in us such dispositions, but that on principle one has and can have in him and through him these possessions: John 1. 18: "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." And Acts 4. 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This exclusiveness was a very essential characteristic of the apostolic belief in the Lord. Should one admit that all the blissful and elevating feelings and moral impulses which Christendom enjoys are results of the life and work of Jesus, but should add that all this is a purely historical product and may at present also be obtained without the corresponding estimate of Christ and without personal union with him, or that one has to reckon with developments leading beyond

us, such a view would take the heart out of belief in the "Lord," for as soon as Christ loses his uniqueness and matchless character, he is no more the Christ.[1]

It is certain that there exists no historical deduction which could scientifically command this apostolic belief in the Lord; here believing experience is everything. But the question obtrudes itself whether Jesus thought and asserted of himself what this belief attributed to him. If we had to answer it in the negative no imagination ever so blessed could make amends for the loss of the truth. Better no belief than a mendacious one! If the question is to be affirmed it would, indeed, not prove what no inquiry can demonstrate that Jesus was really the "Lord and Messiah," as he, together with his disciples, considered himself—but with a good and honest conscience we could say that our belief is not opposed by the historical result of the examination. But whoever should feel that this considerate judgment was too tame, he might strengthen the certainty of his belief by the further observation that a picture of Jesus which came nearer to

[1] Certainly not the Christ of the New Testament.—Editor.

the human standard could only be prepared from our sources by forced means.

To obtain an impartial result we leave the Gospel of John entirely out of the question—not because we consider it as untrustworthy, but because the "moderns" would not follow us on that ground. We only use the first three Gospels, and of these especially Mark; also the sayings grouped together by Matthew. Here one would expect to find, proportionally, firmest historical ground. From this limited material it can already be proved that Jesus claimed for himself exactly that which the apostles affirmed him to be, the "Lord."

It is certain, unconditionally so, that Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah. A few scholars have controverted this. If they were right, we would have to surrender every historical statement: we would have an equation with nothing but unknown quantities, and from our sources even the narrowest and most unsteady bridge would no more lead to any historical fact. The oldest portions of the Gospels conceived Jesus as the Messiah and introduced him as such, therefore to take away this presuppo-

sition is to dissolve the entire Jesus-picture into intangible mist. Had Jesus not meant to be the Messiah the cause of his condemnation would have remained in perfect obscurity. It would also be inconceivable how his disciples could attribute to him a title of which the Jews in the face of the cross, and the Greeks in general, could have no understanding. It belonged to the safest facts that Jesus accepted from the mouth of Peter the confession (Mark 8. 29): "Thou art the Christ." Also (Mark 11. 1 sqq.; 14. 61 sq.) that he entered into Jerusalem as the Messianic King of peace; and to the question of the high priest, whether he was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, gave the answer: "I am." Historically, also, nothing can be opposed to the fact that Jesus openly professed before Pilate to be King of the Jews and that the governor had this title written over the cross (Mark 15. 2, 26). To be sure, it becomes evident that Jesus did not boastingly and provokingly announce his Messiahship, but meant to have it carefully kept secret till toward the close of his ministry.

But there are more plausible reasons for

this than those which modern theologians offer, namely: that he himself did not quite enjoy his Messianic title! Where is there even the shadow of a proof for this, even when he inquired after the public feeling concerning his person, and finally asked his disciples: "But whom say ye that I am?" What else could Jesus have claimed to be than the Messiah when he elevated himself as a matter of course above all kings (Mark 12. 36; Matt. 12. 42), and prophets, including John the Baptist (Matt. 11. 11; 5. 11 sq.; 17. 10 sq.), and saw fulfilled in his person and revealed unto the disciples what the prophets desired to see (Matt. 13. 17, see 5. 17)? It never occurred to Jesus that he should be ranked with the prophets. Over against servants he knew himself as the Son (Mark 12. 6). With what sovereign authority does he place beside the word of the law his (Matt. 5. 22-28, etc.): "But I say unto you." A prophet would have said (for instance, Amos 1. 3, 6): "Thus saith the Lord." One might dispute the historicity of some of these sayings, but it is an arbitrary act to do away with this evidence of a super-prophetic consciousness in Jesus.

Should Jesus, indeed, have made the inquiry, "Whom say ye that I am?" only under the inevitable stress of ideas which surrounded him and constrained his thinking, when he adopted the Messianic title, which would not have been a really suitable expression of his consciousness? In that case we should find some trace of uncertainty in the use of the title and in the assertion of the claims connected therewith; whereas, on the contrary, we everywhere meet with nothing but royal certainty and clearness. Jesus never struggled and doubted whether he were really the Messiah, but only whether it were necessary that he, as Son of God, should suffer (Matt. 14. 36). What mostly grieved him after Peter's confession, according to the present accounts, was not the inner conflict between the claims to Messiahship which he recently intended and the almost necessary apprehension of it as a political title, but the effort of Peter to divert him from the path of suffering (Mark 8. 32 sq.). In reality the Messianic title expressed exactly that which Jesus claimed as his peculiar work over against the mere prophets. He not only meant to preach but to bring in the

Kingdom of God. On the attitude to his person depended whether it should come in or not. How did the Lord everywhere put himself into the foreground! Thus "For my sake," he often said to the disciples, ye are persecuted, or ye deny yourselves—and obtain thereby the life or the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5. 11; Mark 8. 35; 10. 29). "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," said Jesus (Matt. 10. 37) as something very self-evident. Such a word savors not of a cold fanaticism, as it has been usually employed against the natural duties of love in favor of the monastic "choice of a profession." We should remember that the Gospel of John presents evidence of Jesus' filial love (John 19. 26 sq.) which brings the Lord humanly nearer to us. In the first Gospels, which are to be decisive for the picture of Jesus, occur still more definite sayings which push the human relationship behind the relation to the Kingdom of God and its King (Matt. 8. 22; 12. 48 sq.).

Whoever could speak thus and claim the hearts of his followers wholly for himself must either have been eccentric or that he

dared to suppose that it was becoming in him as a man to anticipate feelings like those in Psa. 73. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth, that I desire beside thee." What claim is suggested also in the word (Matt. 12. 30): "He that is not with me is against me!" And even the milder inversion (Mark 9. 40): "for he that is not against us is on our part," supposes that Jesus stood with his disciples at the center of God's work.

The self-consciousness of that Jesus whom the oldest sources describe, was Messianic through and through, and nothing indicates that the acceptance of the Messianic title meant a half-reluctant accommodation. This result nothing can change, even though one or the other of the quoted words is denied to Jesus. The fact is firmly established. That Jesus did not at once speak plainly is essentially explained from this that his intention was not to enforce faith outwardly, but to have it proceed from one's innermost experience. He could not do otherwise if he had in view not the political character but the religious substance of the Messianic thought. And what is this religious sub-

stance? This question most modern inquirers put into the background; but when Jesus eliminated the political, national claims and yet wished to be the Messiah, the main question would be what content remained for his Messianic picture. It is pure embarrassment when one evades the closer inquiry by stating that the Messianic title is in the end unimportant, what Jesus was he was aside from this notion, etc. Jesus himself could never have effectuated separation between his general religious consciousness and his Messianic consciousness. He was no tragic-hero who sank through the conflict of his real and true nature and assumed a Messianic disguise. He who thus describes him follows not the sources, but the necessity to create human analogies for this matchless figure. The sources rather agreed with the apostolic estimate of the matchless "Lord and Messiah." Between that which the Jesus of our sources meant to bring to the world and the prophetical picture of the Messianic time of salvation which remains after deducing the political aspirations of the times there exists a remarkable agreement. Three traits essentially fill up the picture. The Messianic

time of salvation would bring forgiveness of sins and thereby righteousness and purity which is painfully lacking in the present (Isa. 2. 18; 4. 4; 33. 24; 44. 22; Jer. 31. 34; 50. 20; Zech. 13. 1). On this was founded the second part: that the people should enjoy the presence of God and find a refuge with him (Isa. 4. 4 sqq.; 25. 4 sqq., etc.), would be ruled in righteousness and peace by a King whom God would raise up (Isa. 9. 6; 11. 2; Jer. 23. 5 sq.; Ezek. 34. 11, 23; 37. 24). Finally the prophetic glance extended over all nations and the thought of a world-mission and a world-judgment arose (Isa. 2. 2 sq.; Dan. 7. 14 sqq.).

The inquiry how far these deepest characteristics of prophetic hope were alive among the contemporaries of Jesus or were overgrown by politico-fanciful imaginations, may here be left aside. That one disclosed the thought world of later Judaism, and thus made clearer the nearest background against the work of Jesus leans, and from which it stood out, was certainly useful in more than one direction: but the roots of the self-consciousness of Jesus do not lie here, but in Old Testament prophecy, with whose Mes-

sianic traits his consciousness coincided, those traits which he found in himself and by which he knew that he had to bring his Messiahship to his people and the world by virtue of personal preparation. The principal content of his Messianic consciousness was just this that personally and alone he mediated to humanity the grace and presence of God which humanity had expected from remote antiquity. Whoever affirms this claim of Jesus by virtue of his own experience, reads the prophets in whom God's Messiah saw himself foretold with a clear view of the fundamental facts, need not shut the eye to the temporal limitation and human drapery—but what God who joined together prophecy and fulfillment and finally gave the world its "Lord" meant in the deepest ground is that which ripened in Jesus, whereas the residue as something extraneous shall fall to the ground.

The basis for intercourse with God was the forgiveness of sins. Did Jesus connect this with his person or did he preach the pardoning love of God simply as an authoritative truth? This is, in the last place, the chief question which decided everything. It

repeats in a concrete form what we already suggested as an alternative rationalism, that is, belief in general ideas which can obtain no exclusive relation to a certain point of history, or an historical self-offering of the living God, who really acted toward humanity in chastisement and grace. Belief in the "Lord" has a real sense only under the supposition that one sees in Jesus not only the announcer but the only authorized dispenser of divine forgiveness. Did he mean to be this?

The ease with which modern delineations of the person of Jesus pass over this main question is surprising. The Gospel of Mark 2. 1 sqq. presents an exceedingly clear account of the healing of the sick of the palsy, which no intelligent inquirer would put aside as unhistorical. Ere Jesus healed the sick he saith unto him: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." These words already read incomparably more authoritative than the prophetical announcement of Nathan to David (2 Sam. 12. 13): "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." Here in place of referring to God the Lord, we have the most personal exercise of lordly right. On this unmistak-

able impression is based the criticism of the scribes: "This man blasphemeth." Indeed there was no knowing how the greatest prophet even could have granted forgiveness of sins in this fashion, for by this he had encroached upon God's prerogative (Exod. 34. 7; Isa. 43. 25), whom sin had offended and who alone could pardon (see Psa. 51. 4). To the Messiah one might, perhaps, have conceded such course of action—but one would then have seen in him, even without further reflection on his metaphysical quality, God's representative on earth. Into these thoughts Jesus completely entered by stating: "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," and in confirmation of the seemingly easy spoken word, he performed the seemingly more difficult miracle.

It has been asserted that the designation, "Son of man," everywhere, where it was otherwise taken as a unique title in the mouth of Jesus, or here at least, was only a paraphrase of the expression "man" (see perhaps Psa. 8. 5).[1] Readily as one might

[1] For a thorough study of this particular subject see Dalman's Words of Jesus. T. & T. Clark. Also a French work, La Mission Historique de Jésus, by Henri Monnier, pp. 3–99, where the views of recent critics are considered. —EDITOR.

treat of it in some other passages, this meaning is perfectly excluded here: it would destroy the nerve of the thought. Could Jesus have meant to say that there was no question of blasphemy, because every man could forgive sins, or because there were at least men on earth who could indulge in such things? This is absolutely precluded for a Jewish consciousness—and Jesus could not have refuted the objection of the astonished scribes. He might rather legitimatize his personal authority by a miracle as it was at his disposal. Would one also father the thought upon him that "the man" had power to do such miracles? If according to the account of Matthew (9. 8) the people glorified God, "which had given such power unto men," humanity in general had this power only through the Son of man, who obtained it for himself and demonstrated it. Thus our history serves for the incontestable proof that Jesus saw his, the Son of man's, Messianic dignity inseparably connected with the power to forgive sins. To the malefactor he promised (Luke 23. 43): "Today shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." Also when the great sinner received the consolation of forgiveness

(Luke 7. 47), the question was not merely of a personally applied sermon but of real performance. The woman who so touchingly expressed her grateful love, expected to get something from Jesus himself; yea, according to the Lord's statement she already had received it ere he pronounced the word of pardon, for forgiveness is not attached to formula and moment—but to Christ's person, toward which sinners pressed near (see also Luke 19. 2 sqq.). When he received sinners and ate with them (Mark 2. 16; Luke 15. 1 sq.), he acted not merely as the kind minister but as God's agent. For a Jewish consciousness this distribution of divine grace was something unheard of—not every one could have bestowed it, only he whom all the prophets expected. That the Gospel was preached to the poor also belonged to the distinguishing marks of him who was to come (Matt. 11. 5; see Isa. 61. 1).

Over against this reference is made to the preaching of Jesus in parables of the pardoning love of God. The only condition for God's forgiveness is repentance and conversion of the sinner. When the father re-

ceived again the son who returned from a far country and sin, or, when the king at his mere request and promise forgave the debt to the unfaithful servant who for years had not delivered up the revenues of his domain, there was no question, we are told, of a special mediator. In like manner the publican in the temple experienced the divine absolution simply in answer to his praying confession (Matt. 18. 23 sq.; Luke 15. 11 sqq.; 18. 9 sqq.). In general Jesus simply directed his disciples to forgive that they also might be forgiven (Matt. 6. 14 sq.; Mark 11. 25 sq.). All these facts are unquestionable. And Jesus could hardly speak otherwise if he himself meant to bring sinners to God. Of a mediatorship which would connect us with an earthly person or of any troublesome apparatus, but which hides God the Father himself, we find no trace with Jesus. Here is true freedom of intercourse with God, no bondage of men. But does this exclude a mediatorship, such as Jesus really claimed for himself? Should a truly historical procedure not rather allow both, that Jesus directs the sinners immediately to God rather than bind them to him-

self—should not a truly historical method follow the understanding of this remarkable double instead of cutting the knot by explaining away a whole number of statements which are neither worse attested nor are shorter than the others? What was finally more incredible—that Jesus meant to be the Messiah, and indeed attributed to himself the divine and Messianic privilege of the forgiveness of sins, or that the believing congregation imputed to him something for which his actual speaking and acts offered no support? To suppose that Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah and then to deny that he connected forgiveness of sins with his person, is, historically considered, an imperfection beyond which one must go either in the one direction or the other. With the common preaching of the pardoning love of God, one must not forget that it was Jesus who thus preached. In his addresses nothing indicated that he only meant to be the beginner of such preaching which everyone could receive without further connection with his person. To be sure, one might forget for a moment that Jesus is the mediator; and if a sinner, in the face of the parables

(Luke 15) would rely on his gracious God without thinking of Jesus, forgiveness would certainly not be ineffectual, for forgiveness adheres not to a dogmatic formula or to a name used according to a pattern. Real and fundamental connection with the person of Jesus is on this account surely not severed: for outside of the congregation gathered around Christ such an intercourse with God is nowhere to be found. Not only of Jesus' authoritative interpretation of the law, but also of his preaching of grace it will hold good (Matt. 7. 29; Mark 1. 22): "He taught them as one that had authority." This is the same word as in the story of the man that had the palsy: "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Jesus did not speak like a scribe in virtue of rabbinical tradition, nor like a philosopher in virtue of inquiring reflection, but in his own, not only prophetic, but Messianic power, whose emanation was his personal forgiveness as his preaching of forgiveness. That both go side by side is just as compatible as the prayers for forgiveness which are found in the Old Testament beside the regulated means of atonement, in which he who prays

did not think of the sacrificial institutions, whose certain meaning outside of this historical circle were surely inconceivable.

This also is correct that Jesus, without considering his person, opened the Kingdom of heaven to all who did the will of God. True, he often spoke in general terms that obedience to the moral order and the commandment of love brought man nearer to God; also, this or that pointed statement which was usually brought into connection with Jesus' special dignity, was indeed conceivable in the mouth of every morally-striving man. When his relatives considered him as being beside himself and sent unto him, calling him from the multitude that sat about him, he declared himself as being separated from them and said (Mark 3. 21; 31 sqq.): "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Thus every one could speak who put Spirit-communion over that of blood-relationship. But when this word was transmitted to us from the lips of a man who, in the communion of those who did the will of God, intended to be not a simple member, but the head, it would certainly be of

special value to be his brother or sister. He who wishes to become a child of God, must have Jesus for a brother. Probably the form in Matthew (12. 50) is exactly correct: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother." The meaning is the same as in the text (7. 21): "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." This saying ought to have never been employed in proof of the thesis that Jesus considered not relation to his person but obedience to the will of God as the condition of entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. For this contrast is connected with his word, which presupposes relation to him as Lord, but would have that relation morally shaped. The declaration of Jesus says nothing else than the Pauline word (Rom. 8. 9): "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Whoever puts it aside must put it to the account of the evangelist, as if for it a truly historical reason did not naturally exist.

The result of all this is that Jesus intended to be accepted as the mediator of the King-

dom of God for humanity; and how could he be such according to his own views and his people's established suppositions, unless he granted forgiveness of sins?

But we shall have to abandon this assertion if only a trace of the consciousness of sin could be proved in Jesus. But according to human analogies it is certainly the most inexplicable fact of his life that considering the tenderest moral sensitiveness, and the most penetrating, the most inconsiderate judgment on the one hand and the lack of every boasting attitude on the other, we never meet with a confession of personal guilt, or even with a gentle whisper which in the least suggested a guilty conscience. This man whom we could not charge with pride when he testified of his humility (Matt. 11. 29; see 21. 4 sq.), knew no moral ideal among men above himself. Without any assuming attitude he saw with simple self-evidence all others far below his eminence. At the same time the Gospels nowhere cause any offensive sensation about Jesus' sinlessness: it is the supposition of the greater fact that he brought forgiveness which needed no explanation. That he himself prayed the

Lord's Prayer with the fifth petition is a groundless assertion. That the Gospels were right when they gave this prayer as a model recommended to the disciples (Matt. 6. 9; Luke 11. 1 sq.) the address already indicated: in no other passage did Jesus ever say "Our Father," even where it had suggested itself for every other man. He either said (Matt. 7. 21; 10. 32 sq.; 11. 27; 12. 50, etc.): "My Father," or (Matt. 5. 16, 45, 48; Mark 11. 25 sq., etc.): "Your Father." Thus he included himself, indeed, with his disciples in the relation to God, but he never broke through the distinctive insuperable barrier. Will any one dare to assert that our Gospels revised the words of Jesus where he actually said "Our Father"? That the faith of the congregation supplied sublime words might seem credible, but that one should have effaced a phrase in which none easily perceived how it could injure the unique dignity of Jesus, would be incredible craftiness. The proper distinction between "Our Father" and "My Father" is a new proof that men could only call upon God as their Father through the mediation of that Jesus whose Son he was in a unique manner.

A real consideration might arise from the fact that Jesus received John's baptism of repentance (Mark 1. 4, 9 sqq.). Should one who thus acted not betray, at least, a general need for forgiveness? But according to the short statement of Mark the result was already that Jesus heard the inner encouragement of his Father: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Not a syllable indicated that this good pleasure rested on received forgiveness; on the contrary, the word made clear that Jesus came up out of the water with an entirely different consciousness than did the others. Every one else would have rejoiced that God's pardon was sealed to him. Jesus alone received as the reward of his obedience the assurance that the Father's good pleasure rested on him at all times. What for others was a baptism of repentance became in him the means for their apprehending his Messianic calling. It is positively true that Jesus came to baptism not with a feeling of guilt but (Matt. 3. 15) to "fulfill all righteousness."

There remains only one word of Jesus which may be cited as proof of a conscious-

ness not exactly of sin but of imperfection (Mark 10. 18): "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." There is no doubt that in the mouth of any other man this statement would indicate a confession of guilt. But could Jesus really have meant that which everywhere else he showed himself very distant from? Could he have meant that he was not good when he intended to bind the rich young man to his person and declared that he would forfeit the Kingdom of heaven unless he were united with him? His word was only new proof that he did not intend to bring anything really new in moral instruction, but that he meant to fulfill in his person that which every man who was familiar with the law and was morally striving after must feel as his need. The rich young man must not think that any good rabbi could reveal new laws by which eternal life could surely be obtained. He was to adhere to the long known commandments of the one good God, and when he had learnt to understand their deepest meaning, that God demanded the whole heart, let him then come to Jesus to receive from him what he could not himself

obtain. Instead of presenting the Lord in his position as mediator, the story of the rich young man rather teaches us what his ordinary preaching of the law really meant. It was pedagogic—certainly not in the sense that it depended not on serious obedience, but only on confession of sin; but certainly so that it was to lead to him who had forgiveness and the healing presence of God. Who does not hear that the demand of a righteousness which was to exceed that of the Pharisees (Matt. 5. 20 sqq.) was to make out of the "righteous" sinners and poor in spirit? (Matt. 9. 13; 5. 3.) Thus Jesus fulfilled the law by preaching it in its entire depth, and the prophets by offering himself as the one whom they promised (Matt. 5. 17).

The self-testimony of Jesus is without a flaw if one accepts as the kernel of his claim that as the Messiah of God he had above all the power to forgive sins. But if we take this soul out of the Gospel and put together a few sayings which without regard to the connection may also be understood of any common human consciousness, then the whole becomes a heap of ruins from whose

crumbs one may erect with the most arbitrary selection a new building of a different style.

It is not worth the trouble to discuss in detail further statements of the Lord. That at the Last Supper he designated his death as a sacrifice for establishing the new covenant, blotting out all sins, aside from some difference of words, the "oldest sources" have stated in a positive manner (1 Cor. 11. 23 sqq.; Mark 14. 22 sqq.). That he designated the giving of his life as an atonement or ransom for many, the "oldest sources" also recorded (Mark 1. 45; see Matt. 20. 28). But when one declares over against this that Jesus never spoke of a necessity of giving satisfaction for sin, one cannot rely on some tangible, historico-critically established suspicion (as also Mark 8. 37), but mainly on a preconceived judgment, that one cannot believe that Jesus was capable of such words. But it is characteristic that the last-quoted words comprehensively gave the object of the coming of Jesus: "The Son of man came to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." We have many such schedule-like statements

and all aimed at the like point that Jesus meant to be the Messiah who should gather the people of God by his pardoning grace (Matt. 5. 17; Mark 2. 17; Luke 19. 10): "I am come to fulfill the law and the prophets." "I came to call sinners to repentance." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." We have here a uniform building, in which every stone fitly joins the other.

At the same time a surprising and important observation presents itself. The declaration of atonement through the self-offering of Jesus leans against Isa. 53. 10 sqq., where we read concerning the suffering servant of God: "He hath made his soul an offering for sin." "He bare the sin of many." Jesus, in adopting these terms and referring them to himself, gave to understand: I am indeed the Son of man who shall exercise judgment and power (Dan. 7. 13; Mark 3. 26), but before this I appeared as the humble servant of God who blotted out sin and offers grace. Thus Jesus himself supplemented and deepened in a manner till then unheard of, the customary splendid Messianic-picture by the picture of the suffering servant described in the book

of Isaiah, and ever since the apostolic writings remind us of Isaiah 53 (as also Acts 3. 13; 1 Pet. 2. 22 sqq.). Which is more credible, that Jesus found himself in that prophecy, or that his followers should have put into his mouth a combination to which no trace of existing Jewish theology referred? He will assume the latter who believes Jesus capable of a very strange self-deception over his earthly successes and over the end of his life. But if Jesus really stands as the aim of prophecy he certainly had a clear understanding of the way of redemption. We thus come back again to the personal attitude toward Jesus as the decisive point. But even considered purely historically, it will not be very obvious that a man who often applied to himself the prophecies of the servant of God (Isa. 61. 1 sq.; see Matt. 11. 5; Luke 4. 18) should also not have found the transition to the fifty-third chapter of the Book of Isaiah. From an evangelist who interpreted the word "himself took our infirmities" in a quite different sense (Matt. 8. 17; see Isa. 53. 4), it were at any rate hardly to be expected that without the precedent of Jesus

himself he should have connected the suffering and death of the Master with this prophecy. But if Jesus knew himself as the suffering and dying Messiah by virtue of the prophecy, it is self-evident that he also purposed his resurrection: for a Messiah who was ultimately to succumb was a contradiction in himself. With these considerations all the predictions of the cross and resurrection come to their true significance, which meaning, criticism, without any really historical reason, would like to expunge (Mark 8. 31; 9. 31; 10. 33 sq.; 12. 10 sq.). To be sure everyone is at liberty to declare the whole material incredible: but to do this one must make up his mind that he can no longer proceed historically but dogmatically. If one allowed even a more important part to stand, a deeper going consideration could at once add numerous threads to other principal parts and we would thus get an indivisible whole. Over against this the question is: Does it seem more credible that such a marvelous person as Jesus really existed—or that the believing church in a remarkably short time created such a harmonious picture, which after all was a misconception? True

we cannot experience the consciousness of a man who in divine power forgave sin and yet awaited expiatory death and afterward the victory of the resurrection. But how could we when this man raised himself as "Lord" over all servants?

Thus we have laid the foundation on which arises the other parts of the Messianic work. And here we can be brief, since it mainly concerns conclusions. We pointed out as the second part of the Messianic hope that God was to be near his people as a protection and refuge. This is the next result of forgiveness, and as this was present in the person of the Lord, the same human form represented the otherwise distant God. On this we hardly ever find a theory in the mouth of Jesus, nevertheless the Lord speaks and acts from a consciousness which is based on this fact. The center and source of the unique consciousness of Jesus was not, as has been said, a new personal piety, but the confidence that he brought near and mediated to men God's grace and power. His personal communion with God had to be taken into account for it only as a necessary basis. We have at least no document which inde-

pendent of Jesus' consciousness gives us an insight into his purely personal religious life. The reporters stood far below the Master, and it never occurred to them that they could trace the traits of his individual inner life. They looked up to him like a child to his father or a pupil to his teacher, who always saw and retained what the superior person intended for him and performed, and who could not suppose that like him the Master also had inward struggle. We might think it necessary to take up another point of view and for more accurate historical consideration bring the Lord Jesus down to our level as pupils, but if we tried it we would find ourselves left by our documentary material. We might then complain of the insufficient report and improvise for ourselves what might seem to us the most essential in the life of every man—or we might perceive that before us a Lord and Master actually stands whose life-content we apprehend only in the side turned to us, but whose self-life remains a mystery inaccessible for all men because it is the life of the "Lord."

The sublimest passage in the first three Gospels, in which Jesus speaks of his unique

relation to the Father and of his mediatorship for all men, has recently been put to the account of a poet who found in it the most wondrous expression for Jesus' sense of his power (Matt. 11. 25 sqq.): "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." To be sure a matchless poet who struck the only proper key in a masterly manner! But where a man speaks in this tone of supremacy he is not in the habit of adding: "I am meek and lowly in heart," and if he should do it, we should think it a ridiculous thing and judge it as a weakness of an otherwise great man. The unheard of yet living connection of high self-assurance and silent humility shows us that the picture of Jesus could not have been invented and strengthened belief in the right of his claim. And how little do we see into the depths of his own soul! It must certainly turn out true that none knew the Father as did the Son: for otherwise he could not have revealed the Father and called every heavy laden man unto himself and his peace; but at the same time it remained true: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." We know him and yet know him not. His inner

life and personal communion with the Father were never unfolded before us but only so far quietly revealed that we might understand his mediatorial consciousness: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." How should we feel after a man who spoke thus? We feel ourselves imperfect and needy—he knows himself as the Giver of all gifts. We feel ourselves as members—he knows himself as the head. It is true that his dependence on the Father remained, who delivered unto him all things—but over against all men Jesus stood in an otherwise unprecedented relation of superiority: whoever bowed to him was as safe as with God himself. The matchless majesty of this word which could hardly be surpassed by a Johannine Jesus-discourse spoke for itself; but it advances perhaps into a still brighter light when we remember that according to a current rabbinic phrase one "takes upon himself the yoke of the law" or, "the yoke of the heavenly government," when one bowed to God and his will. Jesus put himself beside this claim, and directed to his person that which otherwise belonged to God and God's law.

After that it cannot surprise us that the person of Jesus was the object of believing trust as otherwise only God was. "Come unto me" meant finally nothing else but "believe on me!" Whether Jesus spoke literally of belief in his person may indeed be doubted if one confined himself to the material of the first three Gospels; for the few passages in which Matthew used this formula (18. 6; 27. 42), Mark (9. 42; 15. 32) gave in general form that the question was of belief in general. But positively it is unquestionable that a relation of personal trust, such as Jesus wished and demanded, deserved to be called believing on him. When he promised the bodily or psychical sick (Mark 5. 34; 10. 52; Luke 7. 50): "Thy faith hath made thee whole," and rejoiced over the faith which he found (Matt. 8. 10; see 9. 2), belief in God was certainly not alone meant. As a matter of course, the question concerning God also was (Mark 11. 22), but the main thing was belief in that personality to which the people came with their requests, in which they perceived the presence of God and the divine powers of the Kingdom. Thus one would have to judge the

more certainly whom he saw that Jesus made participation in the Kingdom of heaven and the communion with God dependent on the reception of his person (Mark 9. 37): "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me but him that sent me." With another turn it could also be said that one received the Kingdom of God when he came to Jesus (Mark 10. 14 sq.): "Suffer the little children to come unto me. . . . Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." For in Jesus the Kingdom of God had appeared upon earth. According to a word transmitted by Luke (17. 21), against which, perhaps, at most suspicion can be raised, because the third evangelist only has it, one need wait no more for the Kingdom of God, nor seek for outward signs of its being near. Jesus said to his contemporaries—not: "It is within you," this he would have granted least of all to the Pharisees—but: "It stands in your midst," namely, in my person, since I am the King of the Kingdom. The theocracy had commenced where Jesus was

and was received. Jesus is the King whom God had appointed, the throne which he had established on earth. The miracles of Jesus, especially his power over demons, proved that the central forces of the Kingdom of God were already at hand and at work (Matt. 12. 28): "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you." That God would really become master of resisting nature was merely a question of time. Jesus and his power served as a pledge of the consummation of the Kingdom. In it God exercised his dominion inwardly and for a beginning also outwardly. Whom Jesus sheltered was under the protection of God.

From this there results as an inevitable consequence the third and last part: The vision of the world and judgment of the world through Jesus. In the saying of the Lord: "Come unto me all," he purposed the call of the world. We do not think here of the mechanical inference that, if all should come, all must be called. For who will tell whether the humanity in its full extent stood before the soul of the Lord when he said this? We would not even quarrel about

words, but simply say: when Jesus, according to the testimony of the first Gospels, put himself in a very unexampled manner in the center of humanity, it was at any rate intrinsically logical that he knew that his Gospel and his person were appointed for the entire human race. Against this conclusion a few statements according to which he meant to have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15. 24; see 10. 6) are of no account; for beside them stand others which speak of a preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world (Mark 13. 10; 14. 9). Was Jesus less discerning and more narrow-minded than the prophets who, in the distant future, saw all Gentiles walk in the light of Jehovah and ascribed to the servant of the Lord the task not only to raise up the tribes of Israel, but to bring salvation to the end of the world? (Isa. 2. 2 sqq.; Micah 4. 1 sqq.; Isa. 49. 6; see Zeph. 3. 9; Zech. 14. 9, 16.) The miracle, that the evangelists without the precedent of Jesus had first coined the words of a world-mission, and this at a time when one could rather believe them than see, would be greater than that the

Lord himself had glanced at all nations and future generations. Why did he reserve the preaching of the gospel in all the world to his disciples and his church, whereas he confined himself to Israel? In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said to the disciples (Matt. 5. 14): "Ye are the light of the world." There is only one single enigmatical word which seems to militate against this obvious word (Matt. 10. 23): "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." If it were really not allowed to interpret this expression with reference to the coming of Jesus to the judgment over Jerusalem, nothing would be left than to suppose a misunderstanding of the recorder. That Jesus should have expected his personal advent and the end of the world in that present generation, was absolutely precluded—not only because we could not believe him capable of such an error, but because a word from his lips which could not have been invented, was recorded which says the opposite (Mark 13. 32): "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, neither the Son, but the Father." Or is it imaginable that fiction, which only enhanced

and magnified the picture of Jesus, should for a change have ascribed to him also a word of self-limitation. A dogmatically unbiased judgment rather sees in this statement the unimpeachable standard for seemingly or really deviating discourses (also for Matt. 16. 28; Mark 9. 1).

In the closest connection with the offer of the gospel to the whole world stands the belief that Jesus shall judge the world. If any thought pervades the three first gospels it is this, that the eternal destiny of men depended on their relation to Jesus. A worse judgment than that over Sodom and Gomorrha will come upon him who carelessly passed by the deeds of the Lord or the preaching of his message (Matt. 10. 15; 11. 23 sq.). Whosoever confessed Jesus, him would he confess before his Father which is in heaven; whosoever should deny him, him will he deny (Matt. 10. 32). Though it is not directly said that this should take place in the last judgment, yet everything points to this end (see Mark 8. 38). At all events one must think of the last judgment when Jesus at the close of his Sermon on the Mount shuts the door of the

Kingdom of heaven upon such who said, "Lord, Lord," without doing the will of his Father (Matt. 7. 21 sqq.). Whenever Jesus called himself the "Son of man" he saw himself almost always in the position of judge of the world (Matt. 13. 41; 16. 27; 19. 28; 24. 27 sqq.; 44 sqq.; 25. 31 sqq.; 26. 64). It could hardly be doubted that he applied to himself Daniel's prophecy of the son of man whom God invested with his everlasting Kingdom (Dan. 7. 13 sqq.). If one cannot bring himself to do away with the sublime title in general, he should plainly acknowledge that its essential meaning was just this that it attributed to the "Son of man" the judgment of the world. Why should it be inconceivable that Jesus, "who with matchless energy impressed on the soul of his disciples the fear of the Almighty God, who could destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. 10. 28), "could have awarded to himself world-judgeship in the place of God"? This is exactly as little inconceivable as when he directed men immediately to God and yet at the same time connected them with his own person. The Lord had no idea that his action differed

from God's action, so that God no longer judged the world if Jesus did it. Instead of critically collating what entirely accorded in Jesus' thoughts, we should rather have here seen an indication that also such statements of the Lord which had no metaphysical coloring, often betrayed a consciousness of that which we call his divinity: for it is remarkable indeed that Jesus ascribes judgment both to himself and the Father. For any mere human person this were a contradiction. On the whole a man to whom all that we have said of Jesus would apply, would, properly speaking, veil God, but Jesus revealed him and remained completely transparent for him—the decisive mark that he was really one with God. When one has felt this in the forgiveness of sin, which power the Son of man exercised, he will not scruple that Jesus intended to be the judge of the world. The one is rather the reverse of the other; and it is not accidentally that the title "Son of man" is also used in those sayings in which the future judge of the world showed himself in his preceding earthly life as the dispenser of grace (Mark 2. 10; 10. 45): "The Son of man hath power

on earth to forgive sins." "The Son of man came to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Thus everything harmonizes again in a most admirable manner. But aside from this impression of the inner harmony of the transmitted words, we have also good reason to leave the statements of the world-judgeship as they were in the mouth of Jesus. We have here also a saying which could not be invented because it knew of a limit for Jesus, which his congregation had certainly not imputed to him. When the sons of Zebedee asked for places on the right hand and on the left hand of their heavenly King, Jesus answered (Mark 10. 40): "It is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." The fact that he should return to glory is allowed, but the right of disposing of honors was reserved to the Father. But when Jesus comes again, he will not appear in an undefinable glory which only means that his work was not destroyed, but he appears for the judgment of the world, the man whom the council of his people judged, would himself be the judge of all men (Mark 14. 62).

It is probably a result of respect for Jesus, therefore a dogmatical judgment, when some modern theologians deny that he claimed for himself the judgment of the world. He who has lost all relation to Jesus will not doubt that the noble enthusiast ascended this dizzy height also; for the records speak too clearly. But whoever would adore him in his morally-religious heroic greatness, and yet not acknowledge him as such as our Scriptures represent him, will at least take the most offensive burden from this greatest among the sons of men. For it were indeed not simply confusion in contemporaneous ideas but blasphemy and madness when a man sat himself down directly on God's judgment-seat, unless God had placed him there. Thus this investigation of the material of the "oldest sources" comes back again to its starting-point; we stand before a question of belief and religious experience which is found in Jesus. Efforts to break some larger stones from the harmonious building of tradition are futile efforts. The picture of the Jesus who presented himself as God's representative upon earth and in the future judgment, and believed that the

weal and woe of all men was put into his hand, shall remain, and the question is: Madness or truth? Nor can we avoid this staggering, simple question when the prophecy of a modern is fulfilled: "Modern theology will once become very honest." We would plainly exclaim in the face of the most enhanced claims of Jesus which exceeded everything human and yet betrayed nothing of fanatical excitement (John 10. 21): "These are not the words of him that hath a devil." Rather: "It is the Lord."

To this knowledge one may come if, as we have thus far, he has in view the practical religious side of the relation of Jesus to humanity. One is often too quick with his opinion that belief in Jesus' "metaphysical," that is, essential divine sonship, is a later product, because there is nothing of it in the first three Gospels. As a matter of course the belief in Jesus did not originate with such perceptions. The nearest and first was the impression of his person, and even today a correct perception of his divine nature, without a corresponding, personal relation can be outranked by an honest trust in the person of the Lord and a sincere obedience

which knows nothing, perhaps, of deeper mysteries. Practical religious attitude toward the Lord will always remain the essential thing; and much is already gained if we can convince ourselves that according to the first gospels the self-consciousness of Jesus answers to the confession of his church, that he is the Lord, and that with forgiveness of sin and God's presence, he will exactly give that which his believers are conscious of having received from him. The deep and decisively separating trench runs not between the different theological groups which profess Jesus in the sense of a practical belief in him as the Lord to whom the Father has transmitted all his revelation, but lays, perhaps, more or less stress on metaphysical perceptions: it rather separates confessors of the only "Lord" from the mere admirers of the most powerful religious hero that ever existed. When in our Bible the documents of the primitive apostolic faith, which thus far we allowed to speak alone, testify of a belief in the Lord which is satisfied with actual connection with the person of Christ, who is put by the side of God, without penetrating however into other

depths, we shall have to acknowledge such belief as Christian, for it is founded on essential parts of apostolic tradition.

Over against this, the latest "religio-historical" sketch, whose main point is to do away with Jesus' own belief in his salvation-mediatorship, and put in its place an enhanced prophetical consciousness, must get rid of the earliest stratum of tradition and construct an entirely new picture of Jesus back of the records. At the same time criticism of the records which obtrudes itself upon every scientific-historical working is wholly displaced; there is a shifting of the entire matter of fact where the question is no longer the credibility of even the most essential traits of the biblical picture of Jesus. The historical Jesus transmitted to us wished to be accepted as the "Lord" in the sense in which his church confessed him: in the judgment and downfall of the world communion with him was to bring salvation. Whoever will not admit this, nor that the real Jesus was capable of such aspirations, may consider the entire tradition as untrustworthy: but he must not claim confidence for the

scientific reconstruction he puts in its place. A believing church does not live on scientific possibility, but on certainty. This perception will not trouble him who attaches no value to historical revelation; for he needs no eternal point in history on which he can rest, though the traits of the Father with those of the Son may be obliterated. But whoever knows that the sure possession of God is connected with intercourse with Jesus, will always declare that the transmitted picture of Jesus cannot have been devised. He can certainly employ criticism and distinguish between sources of the first and lesser order: but somewhere in the tradition he will gain a footing and abide by that which is given, perhaps not in every detail, but in the principal facts. To believe in the historical manifestation in Jesus and at the same time to despair of the trustworthiness of his historically transmitted picture—is a contradiction in itself. One may make the domain of trustworthy writings very narrow: but if this possession is really retained, one stands on tangible ground from which he can proceed further. In this sense we have thus far adhered to the few sources

which are considered as the oldest on the life of Jesus.

In addition to this the majority of the New Testament writings represent a further developed estimate of Christ. The Epistles of Paul which may have been written before the oldest gospel-writings, confess, with full clearness not only a Christ whose life runs into the eternal theocracy, but whose origin lies also in eternity. He who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and therefore received the name over all names, was already in the form of God: by his humiliation he acquired only what belonged to him from eternity (Phil. 2. 6 sqq.). He became poor for our sakes, that through his poverty we might be rich (2 Cor. 8. 9). Whoever realizes that according to Paul God "sent forth his son into the world," like his eternal Spirit (Gal. 4. 4, 6; see Rom. 8. 3, 32), will thereby not merely think of the kind condescension of the earthly Christ, but of his descent from heaven to earth. A Christ, who as the exalted is the Lord and is treated like God, must always have been of divine nature. For God did not come into existence; he is

eternal. Such thoughts are a necessity where one perceives an apotheosis as the abomination of all abominations. If Christ is really the Lord, the eternal God appears in him. After all it is incredible that for Paul Christ should have been a heavenly being already existing before his earthly appearance, but without any real divine character. Against this supposition speaks also the fact that the apostle once at least called the Lord Christ plainly "God," "blessed forever" (Rom. 9. 5; see also 1 Tim. 3. 16): he, who according to the flesh came from Israel, was according to the other side of his being eternal God. This understanding could only be evaded by establishing a very desperate sentence: "From Israel comes Christ according to the flesh. He, who is over all, God, be blessed for ever."

John established the divinity of Christ in the form that he identified the Lord with the eternal creative word of God. In this unique fact is found the explanation that Jesus called all men unto himself and could offer something to all—as the evangelist says (John 1. 16): "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." Even the

most comprehensive spirit has only a limited circle which he can influence; the limit of his time and nation, as well as of his individuality, confine him. Men may be influenced by him for a time and perhaps sacrifice their own peculiarity to genius: but thereby they do not become free, but bound. He who wholly enslaves himself to a man is stretched or pressed into a bed of Procrustes, so that he becomes crippled. A limited human character can only attract congenial characters and captivate them for a length of time. But on the side of Jesus experience confirms how right he was with his exclamation: "Come all unto me!" He who comes to him does not feel himself belittled in his nature, but free and great. This can only be understood when this man is seen to be something else and something greater than an historical-human individual. He is not *a* word of God, the expression of *a* divine thought, but *the* word in which the Creator embodied his whole plan of the world and humanity. If one harmonizes with Jesus, he finds his way back to the original image as God devised and conceived it, and by reason of this he becomes free.

Jesus is the creative word by which God called the world into existence. What else could he be if, as the evangelist was convinced and experienced, he meant to be an eternal divine being, and yet could not be the Father himself to whom he prayed? The history of creation a solution of the enigma offered: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Since he created them by his word, the evangelist (John 1. 1 sqq.; see 1 John 1. 1 sqq.) can inferentially say: "In the beginning the word already was"—and it was with God; and since nothing else yet existed than God, it had to be itself something in or of God: "The word was of divine essence." This eternal, divine creative word to which all beings owed their existence contained light and life for creation, and man would have so much life as he took from the creative word and power of God. All this the evangelist could develop from the history of creation without speaking of Jesus in the first verses of his book. But he continues (John 1. 14): "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." For in Jesus, the man of flesh and blood, he expe-

rienced what could not be said of a mere man born of the flesh, but only of God's creative word: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." This would doubtless be the trend of the thoughts with which John obtained the experience he had of his Master, in whom his soul found the peace which could only be the peace of God. What he meant becomes, perhaps, more transparent when we add a like thought of Paul. Jesus is the image of God (2 Cor. 4. 4). This may perhaps be so understood with reference to the earthly life, that in the human form God's essence was reflected—perhaps in the sense of the word (John 14. 9): "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." From Jesus' gracious work we can read aloud the Father's love and power. But then the question arises: How can a human image so fully coincide with God's image? The answer is: we have not to do with a common portrait which must ever be limited, but with the original itself, of which the history of creation says (Gen. 1. 27): "God created man in his own image." As according to John the eternal word of God was made flesh, thus according to Paul God's

own image after which we were formed, appeared in the ranks of men (Col. 1. 15 sq.; see 2. 9). Whoever is stamped with this mark is not spoiled or marred, but restored to his true nature, he is freed (2 Cor. 3. 17 sq.): "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty . . . and we are changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

We see, therefore, how the apostles sought supports in order to make clear to themselves what surpassing greatness they had in their Lord. It is possible that by virtue of practical relation to Jesus, one may be a true Christian and show little inclination to further pursue such often difficult trains of thought. But that the apostles already took them up is a hint that a consequent belief could not dispense with them. When one is in earnest with the fact of experience, a realization that Jesus is "the Lord," who stands in place of God, he cannot be satisfied with the assumption that he was a man in the ranks of other men. True, he is this—but he is more: God, manifested in the flesh. Simple faith may feel little need for further speculations—yet all the practical religious

statements which we put together will seem to him like soaring in the air as soon as this background disappears; therefore no more and no less hangs on this "metaphysical" substructure than the unshaken truth and sincerity of our belief in the Lord. One must not therefore be surprised that the ancient church fought with tenacity for the eternal Godhead of the Son and belief in the Trinity: which proves that she was in earnest with her belief in Jesus as the Lord. Other founders of religion may have been invested now and then by their votaries with divine glory, but since a real mental struggle concerning the essential relation of the respective man to deity nowhere followed, one must infer that on the whole such glorification consisted only in hyperbolic phrases. In Christianity only is the problem offered, because here one seriously believes he meets with God himself in the human Master. He who on this account wholly puts aside this problem will probably break the vessel in which alone he can retain belief in the Lord.

After all we cannot entirely pass by a final side-question: How did Jesus himself think of his essentially divine sonship? Even his

sublimest sayings from the first Gospels with which we had to do, contained no undisguised "metaphysical" statements. Faith will plainly conclude that he who spake thus must have had a divine consciousness. But, if we nowhere find points to support it, it might be bold to attribute something to Jesus which not he but his disciples only claimed for him. It is easily seen that judgment on this question depends on one's attitude toward the Gospel of John. Whoever sees in the Jesus-discourses of this book historical materials, will not doubt divine consciousness of Jesus. He will so arrange the relation of the different gospels that the first Gospels shall report and transmit the discourses of the Lord which were designed more for popular understanding, whereas it shall be reserved to the beloved disciple to give still deeper looks into Jesus' divine essence, for the decisive words were spoken in the closest circle of the disciples (for instance John 14. 9 sqq.; 16. 28; 17. 5, 24). Nevertheless such an assumption would be inadmissible unless the oldest sources pointed suggestively at least in a like direction. In seeking such traces we come upon unsafe

ground: for this much is certain, that Jesus, who intended that faith should come from within, did not surprise his hearers by forcible manifestation of his divine consciousness. We must not, therefore, expect intentional statements from the start, but only such words as open an adequate prospect.

In this connection we must ask for the meaning of the title "Son of God," which we have laid aside till now. That this title had a metaphysical meaning with Paul and John, no one will dispute today. When Jesus is called "the only begotten Son" of God (John 1. 14; 3. 16; 1 John 4. 9; see Rom. 8. 32), he is incomparably more than a first-born: he is the Son of God in a sense in which no other man is nor ever can be. He is essentially one with the Father—as "true God, begotten of the Father in eternity." And by this very belief the apostles intended to make it clear that God deals with humanity through Jesus far otherwise than in any event or phenomenon of history which is influenced by him. When the Father gave his only begotten Son, he tore the best from his heart, and the appearance of Jesus proved not only the Father's love,

but was really its proof. Thus belief in Jesus' divinity became the bulwark of the Gospel, that is, of the true manifestation of grace. Everywhere else was law and doctrine—here alone it was God who gave himself in his Son. By this Christianity differs from every other religion: it stands fundamentally upon a different and unique foundation. This "absoluteness" of Christianity depends finally on the metaphysical meaning of the title of its founder. It would, therefore, have had serious consequences if the apostles against Jesus' own will had first given it a metaphysical meaning.

In many passages "Son of God" may mean nothing else than the "King of Israel," or "Messiah" (Mark 3. 11; 8. 29; see Matt. 16. 16): because God had already promised his special fatherly protection to the ruler of the people (2 Sam. 7. 14 sq.; Psa. 2. 7). But if Jesus knew himself as the Son of God, he had possessed a personal content long before he could think of the Messianic title. Could the story have been invented that when only twelve years of age he had to be about his Father's business? (Luke 2. 49.) At that time he was God's Son because he

stood in the most intimate personal child-relation to his heavenly Father. If one could have interpreted his experience at the baptism as the awakening of the Messianic consciousness, then the personal possession took the shape of the calling (Mark I. 11): "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus did not shape his consciousness according to the outward title: but because he was personally secure in his Father, he could become for others a leader to the divine sonship. This was for him the essential character of the Messianic office—and when he accepted the current Messianic title, "Son of God," he filled it with just these contents. But the personal child-relation of Jesus is wholly matchless, he was the mediator for the others. Thus resulted statements which brought this son into a nearness with God which could not be reached by younger sons (Matt. 11. 27): "No man knoweth the Father, but the Son; neither knoweth any man the Son, save the Father." That Jesus as Son of God, in spite of all communion with his brothers and sisters, reserved to himself his peculiar position, follows also from the fact which we have al-

ready noticed, that he never put himself with an "Our Father" in the same order with men. True the Father of Jesus is through him also the Father of believers: but there remains an essential gradation which must mean more than the difference of predecessor and successor. Here a mysterious reality reveals itself, which goes beyond a unique religious relation. Upon such a background only the solemn stress became intelligible by which Jesus plainly designated himself as "the Son" (Mark 13. 32; see also Matt. 12. 32): "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." What being was this who over all angels comes into the most immediate presence of the Father? And how peerless must he have stood as "the Son" beside "the Father!" That such words which suggest a limit to Jesus' knowledge or work are hardly invented we have already noticed. The matchless blending of greatness and lowliness is the stamp of their genuineness —and at the same time a guarantee of their truth. Thus only spoke the only Son of the Father. We need only recall the question

which Jesus put to the Pharisees with reference to the one hundred and tenth psalm (Mark 12. 37): How could David call the Messiah Lord if he is only his Son? That in the Messianic title "Son of God" the Jews also apprehended at least something of essential dignity, we learn from the examination before the high priest (Mark 14. 61 sqq.). Without this supposition one would not regard it as "blasphemy," that Jesus meant to be "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." The two elements of the Messianic expectation that on the one hand God himself, on the other a hero was to appear in his power, were about to be blended together.

This foundation being firmly established, other statements may also open an awe-inspiring revelation of Jesus' divine Messianic consciousness. Is it really only this earthly man and not God's majestic presence, God's essential representative, which cries (Matt. 23. 37): "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings"?

Whoever considers the first Gospels which knew of no repeated festive-journeys to Jerusalem, as authoritative over against the Gospel of John, has the least right to think here of the repeated efforts of Jesus to gain the people: "And ye would not"—says the God who in the Old Testament history had already vainly pleaded with the people through his prophets (verse 34 sqq.), into whose address Jesus entered unaffectedly without the usual prophetical introduction, "Thus saith the Lord." Thus one might think rather, since in the end it could only refer to God, that he gathered the people as a hen her chickens, since in the Old Testament also he was spoken of in like manner (Deut. 32. 11; Isa. 31. 5). When Jesus saw his people as sheep not having a shepherd (Mark 6. 34; see Luke 15. 4; John 10. 12), we can adduce as Old Testament copy the words of Moses, who asked God for an able successor, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd (Num. 27. 17). We shall also have to think of such passages in which God promised that He would shepherd his sheep (Ezek. 34. 5, 11 sq.; Isa. 40. 10 sq.; compare Matt. 25. 33,

with Ezek. 34. 17). Also when Jesus called himself the bridegroom of his disciple-group (Mark 2. 19; Matt. 25. 6), he took the place of God, who in the Old Testament was Israel's husband (Hos. 2. 19; Isa. 54. 5).

This brings us to a last observation. The Old Testament "congregation of Jehovah" (Num. 27. 17; Deut. 23. 1), when Israel rejected its king, was repeated in the congregation of Jesus. When Jesus said that he would build his church upon the profession of his Messiahship, he intended to occupy the same position in the face of his people as the covenant-God had in his chosen people (Matt. 16. 18): "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Consequently we have arrived again, reached our starting-point—Jesus is the Lord, the historical manifestation of God the Lord, around whom the salvation-congregation was gathered; and Jesus himself claimed this position. Whether Peter said (Acts 2. 21): "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"—or as Jesus promised to the church of his confessors: "The gates of hell

shall not prevail against it," it was only a different expression of the same truth. It is true that critical theologians are almost one in declaring the words about the church (Matt. 16. 18 sqq.; 18. 17 sqq.) to be unhistorical. It is very probable that they did not stand in the original collection of Matthew; but on this account they can be as little denied to Jesus himself as the parables transmitted by Luke (15. 3 sqq.; 18. 9 sqq.), which were also not contained in the oldest source of the discourses. The judgment on such gleaned pieces will always depend on the impression which one receives from them. Are they possible or not in Jesus' sphere of ideas? The answer to this question depends in the present case on this, whether Jesus clearly foresaw that his people would reject him. Was Jesus the Lord, as on whom his congregation believed, then this cannot be denied. But then we must affirm that he was deeply concerned about the church of his professors which was to take the place of the people of Israel. In the account of the Gospel of Matthew everything harmonizes admirably. After the disciples were ripe for a personal profession

of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of the Living God, and Peter made it in their name, the Lord declared that such profession, and not belonging to Israel according to the flesh, would decide the boundaries of the eternal church of God; for he knew and declared at once that Israel should kill their Messiah. Nevertheless he remained the victorious Lord: and for the true congregation of the Lord which adhered to him, no longer the flesh but the Spirit should prevail. Jesus abided by his people as the living head (Matt. 18. 20): "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—thus in the divine presence. These words surprisingly accord with a Talmudic saying, which may not necessarily have been coined after the saying of Jesus (Pirke Abot 3. 3): "Where two meet and occupy themselves with the law, the Shechina (that is God's presence) is among them." Has the law as well as the Shechina been exchanged in the New Testament saying for Jesus? In that case we have a new proof that Jesus is and will be the essential exhibition and self-realization of God in the world. And with reference to still another

point our inquiry returns to the beginning. In both alleged passages the professors or the congregation gathered around the name of Jesus, are given the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, or the right to bind and loose. This certainly meant that the forgiveness of sins which Jesus exercised was to be propagated in the church of his followers—but there only. Whoever believed in the self-evident love of God would not very highly estimate such a promise or think it strange. But whoever perceived and knew of the active dealing of God with sinful humanity and knew that his grace in the only begotten Son permanently established itself in the history of mankind, he would perceive that grace, forgiveness and the presence of God are only obtained where one belongs to the people of the "Lord," who in the Spirit is personally present with his people. Nor would he find it impossible that the Lord, who bodily departed from his earthly congregation and personally was with it, gave the commission (Matt. 28. 19): "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We are at the close. It turns out that the way to the full heights of belief in the divinity of our Lord is open, if one only accepts the substantial claims which the Jesus of the oldest sources makes. Historical uncertainties—especially in the materials, which we touched upon lastly—and unsolved dogmatic questions abound. The fundamental position, however, is religiously and scientifically justified. For whether one looks for still another Jesus behind the oldest sources does not depend upon science, but on belief or disbelief in the "Lord." In this department nothing can be obtained by force when the first suppositions are wanting. We may and must satisfy ourselves with this, that faith may very well exist not in spite of the sources, but through the sources. Thus a good conscience will unite with religious certainty.

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